1/11/72

Mr. Fred Graham
The New York Times
1920 L St., NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Fred,

When I phoned you Sunday it was not because you had not kept your word, to call me back as soon as you had written your story. It was, rather, a concern for your integrity, for I have not considered you personally some kind of literary whore but an underinformed reporter rather much the captive of sources he trusted, overwhelmed by the offer of an important scoop to the point where he did not ask himself whether he was being used in a way he might later come to regard as not to his credit, and because before you were of the age of awareness I learned the pressures management and ownership can apply to reporters from living with them.

This is the third day and you have not yet called. I have been home almost constantly. There are certain quite serious errors in your piece that you do not attribute. I assume they represent precisely the ignorance against which I tried to caution you and because of which I rate you the others I would think you would consider generous. I do not pretend my interest was in your personality. It was no more than a desire to in some way bring an end to the nonstop lying about the political assassinations and what so little understood if, indeed, even though of, their consequences. And it was also in the hope that the major papers, particularly your institution, might for once on this subject rise above the level of Mr. Stumer. But if the lessons of The Pentagon Papers has not been learned, perhaps it is a futility.

Aside from being an experienced reporter, you are also a lawyer. I therefore ask you to reread your third graph and ask if one need have acquired more wisdom than can be expected of a high-school freshman to know that it just can't be true regardless of what Lattimer may have seen. How can any pictures, X-rays, clothes, braces, bandages, shoes, socks, comb or leather belt (and does this not tell you that I have pictures you have not seen, as I offered to show you?) in an way establish one way or the other "that Lee Harvey Oswald fired all the shots that struck the President"? Or what is worse, your selection of the direct quote, " that they 'eliminate any doubt completely'."

This is propaganda, not reporting. I would have hoped it below you.

I will not now take the time for a full analysis of your piece. I don't think you would welcome it, my purpose is not to embarrass you, and I almost cut a thumb off Saturday, so typing is uncomfortable. There are a few things I am taking this means of wording you have. Unless you are what I do not want to believe and I am making no such accusation, I think you would want to be aware of the potential of the situation you have created. and at the same time, I am withdrawing my offer to give you access to what which I have obtained that was not in the Warren Commission files.

You say that the Kennedys (whose partisan I do not pretend to be) denied the Commission and its staff access to the autopsy film. And you say, not for the first time (I r mind you despite my warning about the first time) that the Kennedys are responsible for the suppressions of evidence. In all aspects each of these things is false. You give no source.

In a signed piece, unless the standards have changed, you therefore say this on your own authority. As you know, I have written a book on this subject, including this material. I now have no choice but to call a chapter on your scoop. I am asking your authority for these statements, with the intent of quoting you.

With all those to whom you have access, I am distressed that you did not do what most reporters would have done, asked why an expert on piss, not in any way an issue in the assassination or its investigation, was given exclusive access to evidence he could not have understood had he the disposition to - what amounts to an exclusive copyright on what the law defines as public information - when others and those qualified were denied this access. I expect in due time to read the answer in another scoop. I expect it not to be explicit.

Now that you have, extensively and repetitiously, fixed in the public mind the utterly false notion that the Kennedys were responsible for the [redacted], what would you expect to be the result if one who can understand the pictures and x-rays were to see them and come out and say Lattimer is wrong, that they do not support the official story? Why, those terrible Kennedys were even more terrible, they hid the truth about their most famous. And Oswald? He becomes even more saintly.

Having had the benefit of hearing Lattimer before a friendly questioner and at some length, I cannot avoid the belief that one of the reasons you planned me was your knowledge that by his excessness he might blow the whole bit. You made clear he intended to focus more than you did on that rubbish about the brace. When he was not subject to your restraining influence, he did exactly what you told me he intended to do, went crazy with it, for no better reason than to support his crazy, early lies and fictions of lesser disrepute.

For your future reporting, you should know that a bruise is not typical of a wound of entry. Exit wounds also can show bruising. The distinction seems to be in scorching. Or have I helped you with your next effort at propaganda?

In any event, when it is less uncomfortable I plan to write you a series of questions for my own writing. You have given me no choice. I anticipate the reasons you may give, if you respond at all, for declining to answer some. So you can give this some thought, I will be asking you about at least two of your stories (to date) and you should understand that the number of possible sources is in each case limited.

Meanwhile, if you are off on a "get Kennedy" kick, or are preoccupied about being part of one, congratulations on your success. It may not have occurred to you, but if someone were contriving a famous-last-words situations, you have done his job for him. The last living male Kennedy in political life has just validated the Warren Report he has never read, with evidence he has never seen. Coincidence or not, these were Bobby's last words on the subject (San Fernando State College). And, of course, should a critic say the opposite of what Lattimer did, which is inevitable, whose political life is ruined?

What youx intended, you alone can know. What you did is not questioning. I can only hope for your sake you did not intend it. You can't now catch up with the harm you have done, even if you have the disposition, and in this case you can't have the traditional fig-leaf, that you were only following normal journalistic procedures. You followed none.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg